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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0361  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KARACHI 000362

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: REASON 1.4(B) AND (D) DECL: 11/12/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [KCRM](#) [KCRS](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: KARACHI - MQM'S STUDENT-WING AS LEADERSHIP TRAINING GROUND

11. (C) Summary. Poloffs met November 6 with Syed Waheeduzzaman, Chairman of APMSO, which he described as the "mother-wing" of MQM. APMSO provides traditional student support in schools and Universities across Sindh and plays a major role in the day to day operations of MQM by identifying and providing leadership training to future MQM leaders and promulgating the MQM brand among Pakistani youth. He described both MQM and APMSO as true democratic organizations and claimed the perception that APMSO and MQM use violence for political means is part of a media strategy by entrenched feudal and political interests designed to isolate the party. He countered that MQM has been a major force against the spread of violent extremism in Karachi and Sindh. Waheeduzzaman claimed that other political parties, such as the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), feel threatened by MQM's ability to change the "traditional political system" and have blocked their expansion into Sindh's rural areas. End summary.

12. (U) PolOffs met November 6 with Syed Waheeduzzaman, Chairman of the All Pakistan Muttahida Student Organization (APMSO), the student-wing of the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM) political party. Founded in 1978 by MQM's leader, Altaf Hussain, APMSO is one of the largest student-run organizations in Sindh, with 5,000 to 6,000 student members. APMSO, which gave rise to MQM in 1984, was originally created to support "Mohajirs" or marginalized Urdu-speaking immigrants.

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Student Support  
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13. (U) Beyond its role as a recruitment and training hub for MQM leadership, APMSO is known as a highly effective student organization which has significant leverage within school administrations. APMSO is very active on campuses and provides the services of a traditional student organization, including financial assistance, tutoring, discussion groups, social networking opportunities, and community outreach projects. The APMSO booth is a regular sight at admissions events throughout the province, with APMSO members offering assistance with admissions applications or entrance exams.

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The "Mother-Wing" of MQM  
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14. (C) According to Waheeduzzaman, APMSO plays a major role in MQM's day-to-day operations by promulgating the MQM brand, identifying and providing leadership training to future MQM leaders, and by harnessing the voice of younger party members in MQM's governing Central Coordination Committee. Waheeduzzaman described APMSO as the "mother-wing" of MQM, emphasizing the critical relationship between the two organizations. He explained that APMSO's structure mirrors

that of MQM, with a governing Central Coordination Committee (CCC) comprised of representatives from each of up to nine sectors. Each sector contains multiple units comprised of groups of workers. The CCC has representation from each sector and serves as a forum for policy decisions. The CCC also initiates "fact finding committees" to investigate internal complaints against members of the organization, with the power to either sanction or remove offending members. All CCC decisions must be endorsed by two-thirds of the committee's members.

15. (C) While MQM membership is open to the public, members of APMSO are required to complete their studies before becoming full members of MQM, helping to institutionalize their leadership role within the party. APMSO members receive significant leadership training, "ensuring that MQM has a sufficient pool of educated and qualified future leaders," Waheeduzzaman said. Individuals who display sufficient aptitude are hand-picked to fill positions in MQM's specialty wings or committees. Waheeduzzaman specifically noted the role APMSO alumni play in staffing MQM's Medical Aid Committee and Legal Committee, and MQM's NGO, the Khidmat-e-Khalq Foundation.

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Perpetrators of Violence or Scapegoats?  
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16. (C) Waheeduzzaman acknowledged, but sternly denied, the widespread perception that MQM, and to a lesser extent APMSO, use violence for political means. He described all acts of violence associated with APMSO or MQM as either isolated incidents or instigated by those no longer affiliated with either organization. He said this misperception is part of a larger strategy to isolate MQM in the national media by entrenched feudal and political interests

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threatened by MQM's ability to change the "traditional political system." He attributed APMSO and MQM's inability to penetrate the rural areas of Sindh to the concerted efforts of these groups.

17. (C) Waheeduzzaman attributed the recurring violence in Pakistan's schools to the conflict between conservative groups and the more progressive, pluralistic groups such as APMSO. He claimed that while APMSO has good relations with most student groups, they have always been opposed by more conservative groups, such as Islami Jamiat Talba (IJT), the youth-wing of the Jamat-e-Islami (JI) political party. According to Waheeduzzaman, this stems from the fact that that MQM has historically been a major force against violent extremism in Karachi and Sindh, noting that Altaf Hussain was one of the first national leaders to openly speak out about the dangers of extremism. This larger political conflict has trickled down to campuses as these conservative groups have been targeting students both as potential recruits as well as an audience for their messages. A co-ed birthday celebration at the University of Karachi that was attacked by IJT members wielding bats, and the August 2008 clash in Karachi University's Art Lobby, which left 4 students dead and another 14 wounded, demonstrate the potential severity of these incidents.

18. (C) Comment: Post strongly disagrees with APMSO and MQM claims that the organization is non-violent. Acts of violence, whether on campus or in Karachi, can be attributed to the party with great frequency. As a result, there is a common view across Pakistan that MQM uses violence for political means. End comment.

FAKAN